



THE theatrical season is half over, but so far none of the managers have added much to their bank accounts. The New York theatres, with very few exceptions, have been doing very badly, and the same is true of the companies travelling out of town. In this city only two plays have been genuine successes—"The Heart of Maryland" and "The Prisoner of Zenda." The former play is still being presented at the Herald Square Theatre to audiences so large that it is no unusual thing for a thousand dollars to be refused at the doors. It is pleasant to be able to record this extraordinary success for a play by an American author, particularly as most of the plays imported from England, such as "His Excellency," "The Shop Girl," "An Artist's Model," "The Sporting Duchess," "The Benefit of the Doubt," and "The City of Pleasure," received but a cold reception. Most of these pieces were brought over by that enter-

prising manager, Mr. Charles Frohman, who has been somewhat unlucky of late. With the exception of "Too Much Johnson," which made and is still making a great deal of money, Mr. Frohman has not had a real success for some time. However, he is energetic and shrewd, and will probably soon make up for his losses by producing another money-winner.

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The tour of Mr. John Hare in this country is hardly likely to prove satisfactory to that actor. Mr. Hare enjoys considerable popularity in England, where he has been actor-manager for many years, but, although a finished and talented artist, he is not gifted with unusual power or marked personality, which alone can make a tour in foreign countries a pecuniary success. Mr. Hare is an excellent character actor, but is certainly no better than half-a-dozen American actors whom I could name, and whose



Blanche Walsh as "Tribby."
Photograph by Falk.

ambition has never soared so high as to wish to star abroad. One of Mr. Hare's most successful parts is that of *Blandinet*, the elder brother in Labiche's comedy "*Les Petits Oiseaux*," known on the English stage as "*A Pair of Spectacles*." The play was

to be untrue, Mr. Hare's portrayal of the character being in nowise superior to that of Mr. Stoddard. Mr. Hare was seen earlier in Pinero's sensational and impossible play, "*The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith*," which scored an immediate and well-deserved failure.



Miss Julia Arthur.

From photograph (copyright, 1895) by Falk, New York.

produced here by A. M. Palmer some years ago, the veteran actor, J. H. Stoddard, having created the part played by Mr. Hare. The play failed to interest New York audiences, and it was explained at the time that the English success of the piece was due to Mr. Hare's finer interpretation of the part; but the recent presentation of the comedy by Mr. Hare himself proved this

Nothing more crude or tiresome than the earlier parts of this play can be imagined. The plot is improbable and trite, and the chief situation where Mrs. Ebbsmith thrusts her hand into a glowing furnace to rescue a Bible, which she herself has thrown in, is cheap and theatrical in the extreme. Julia Neilson, the new English leading lady about whom so much has been written,



Eleanora Duse.

From a photograph by Vianelli, Venice.

was also a disappointment. Her work gives occasional glimpses of histrionic talent yet undeveloped, but her acting is so crude and so full of mannerisms—many of which seem to have been copied from Ellen Terry—that she failed completely to win her hearers.

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Olga Nethersole closed her New York engagement on the 11th inst., and is now touring our other large cities. Two weeks before she closed here she produced a dramatic version, by Henry Hamilton, of Prosper Merimée's ro-

mance "Carmen." Miss Nethersole made a profound impression in the title rôle, and it was unanimously conceded by the critics that so fine an impersonation of the Spanish gypsy girl had not yet been seen upon the stage. Calvé's impersonation of *Carmen* is a wonderful performance, apart from the singing; but Nethersole's creation is far superior from every point of view. It is more intelligent, more subtle, more real—a triumph of character study. Calvé's *Carmen* is to a great extent idealized by the beauty of the singer's magnificent voice and Bizet's music,



Stuart Robson in "Mrs. Ponderbury's Past,"
Photograph by Moses, New Orleans.

but in the dramatic version there is no music and no singing. The real *Carmencita* is before you in all the passion and recklessness of her semi-savage nature, and like every rôle representing a courtesan the character demands interpretation by an artist to make it acceptable. Miss Nethersole has been harshly criticised in some quarters because of the unusual realism and sensuality with which she invests the part, and to my mind very unjustly. The *Carmencita* of romance was sensuality personified, and no impersonation of this repellent, yet picturesque character, would be artistically complete if played otherwise than this gifted artist

plays it. It is possible that her managers may have sought to make capital out of the sensation made by the actress's realistic ardor—particularly in the much-talked of kissing passages—but the responsibility of the artist ends when she has portrayed the character to the best of her ability and artistic temperament. The play itself might offend prudish minds, and is not likely to have any lasting success on our stage. In the hands of an inferior artist the character might have become offensive, but Nethersole has succeeded in achieving a great triumph in it and in enriching the stage with a remarkable creation. There was to my mind but one flaw in the production, and that was the interpolation of Bizet's music instead of having new incidental music especially composed. No modern composer, probably, could have written music so characteristic and so beautiful as Bizet's, but the new music would at least have had the advantage of being original, and would not have laid Miss Nethersole or her managers open to the charge of plagiarism.

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Augustin Daly's admirable stock company has just produced a success-



Stephen Gratten.



Mlle. Blanche Duhamel.

ful comedy adapted from the German and entitled "The Two Escutcheons." German comedies, as a rule, fall flat in this country, the humor and eccentricities of character of one nation not always being appreciated by another people three thousand miles away. But the new play at Daly's is more universal in its wit and its general plot, and its situations might be as true of this country as of Germany. The piece is admirably acted by Mr. Daly's company, and has been cleverly adapted by Sidney Rosenfeld.

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By a curious coincidence, the two greatest actresses of our day, Eleanora Duse and Sarah Bernhardt, will shortly be playing engagements in this city at the same time. Bernhardt opened at Abbey's Theatre on January 20th, and Duse is due at the Fifth Avenue Theatre early in February. It is not improbable that both artists will give performances of "Camille" simultaneously.

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In many minds, Bernhardt has degenerated as an actress. This is not true. Bernhardt is the same as she ever was. We imagine she has degenerated because there has arisen in the dramatic world an artist who is her superior — Eleanora Duse. Bernhardt represents the stage traditions of the past; Duse the dramatic possibilities of the future. Bernhardt's *Camille*, to-day, is the same as it was twelve years ago; the same as it will be ten years hence. Duse is never the same in the part. She casts aside every tradition, and always does what is least expected of her. Bernhardt's *Camille* is the very personification of the Paris courtesan; Duse's *Camille* represents the fallen woman in general without distinction of race, and is, therefore, a more poignant and human creation. Duse is unquestionably Bernhardt's superior in art. She is an artist in naturalness while Bernhardt is but an artist in artifice.

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The poetic play by Armand Silvestre and Eugene Morand, entitled "Yzeyl," with which Sarah Bernhardt opened her tour at Abbey's, is a Buddhist drama, and the scene is laid six centuries before Christ. *Yzeyl*



Miss Nita Allen.

is a courtesan, and when the Crown Prince of Saryamouni gives up his throne to become the Hindoo Messiah, *Yseyl* follows him and worships him as Mary Magdalen did the Christ. She returns to her home and is amorously

her always, he says, but faith and duty won the battle. In the confession their lips touch, and *Yseyl* droops like a flower. She dies, but to live again in the lotos-flower that the god Indra holds in his large, golden hands. The play is writ-



Miss Grace Filkins.

Photograph by Morrison, Chicago.

pursued by the new king. To defend herself she stabs him. The last act is full of peace, poetry, and melancholy resignation. *Yseyl* is sightless and she is dying. Her only prayer is to hear once more the voice of the Master. He comes at last, bringing words of pity, even of love, for he did love

ten in powerful blank verse, and, like all courtesan rôles, affords Bernhardt a fine opportunity for the theatric and sensuous style of acting in which she excels.

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Among the young leading men of our stage Stephen Grattan occupies a promi-

nent position. He is at the present time a member of the Lyceum stock company. From a Jesuit college Mr. Grattan made his first acquaintance with the footlights as a humble recruit

a part in "Money Mad," *Captain Northcote* in "The Crust of Society," *George de Lesparre* in "L'ed Astray," and just before joining Mr. Frohman he was seen in the production of William Young's



Miss Marie Studholme.

of Augustin Daly's stock company, spending four years in that excellent school without a single opportunity for advancement presenting itself. After leaving Mr. Daly he played *Marshall* in "Captain Swift," the *Priest* in "The English Rose," *Pierre* in "The Two Orphans," the title rôle in "The Ensign,"

play, "Young America," in Boston. He made his *début* at the New York Lyceum in "A Woman's Silence," the piece by Sardou which failed so deservedly, and his excellent performance of the "heavy" part was the one redeeming feature of the production. Mr. Grattan has a good stage presence, an admirable



Marie Valteau.

Elsie Leslie.

Emma Eames.

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diction, and gives promise of developing into a useful actor.

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The first failure that our successful farce-writer, Charles Hoyt, has written for years, "A Runaway Colt," has been removed from the boards and in its place Mr. Hoyt has produced "A Black Sheep," which promises to eclipse in popularity all his other farces. Mr. Hoyt's plays never involve any intricate problems. They are only intended to create laughter, and this they certainly succeed in doing. Even those who are most untiring in advocating stage reform and in demanding that more attention be paid to the serious drama would not wish the better class of farcical entertainment to disappear entirely from the stage. Another farce which appears to be very prosperous is "The Strange Adventures of Miss Brown," now being played at the Standard Theatre.

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The theatres will continue to do worse, instead of better, so long as they are conducted on the same principles

as they are at present—that is to say, in the purely speculative and commercial spirit—and so long as theatrical management attracts, and is in the hands of uneducated and uncultured men. Many of the theatrical managers in this country are little better equipped for their positions than the showmen who in the old days stood at the entrance of their booths beating the public in with a drum. As a rule, he is absolutely ignorant of everything pertaining either to the dramatic art or to dramatic history. He is not an actor himself; knows nothing of the traditions of the stage, and cares less. He has had no artistic training, nor has he the slightest conception what people mean when they speak about "art." How should he? He had a little capital, and he has gone into the theatrical "business," just as he would have invested in a gin-mill. He knows that the public is willing to pay its money to see a good "show," and his idea of a good show is one, naturally, that pleases him. He then proceeds, still in accordance with his own taste, to disfigure the public thoroughfares with vulgar and indecent posters—which,

by the bye, the municipal authorities ought to prohibit as a public nuisance—and by the judicious use of money he is able to fill complacent and mercenary newspapers with his own unim-

disgusted the intelligent public, and keeps it away from the playhouse, so that the few plays of merit which are put forward suffer from the prejudice done the Theatre by vulgar commercial



Mrs. Patrick Campbell and Forbes Robertson as "Romeo and Juliet."

portant personality and also with highly eulogistic advance notices about his attraction which—to their credit be it recorded—the more honest critics promptly reject in their critical capacity. It is the vulgarity and utter inanity of many of the pieces put on the stage nowadays that has wearied and

exploiters. Many even of the respectable managers, those who have some critical ability, education, and taste, and who have the means to secure plays by the most prominent of the world's dramatists, select the plays less for their real merit than for the prominence of their author.

Arthur Hornblow.